

A Pedagogical Error.

Monday.

"We studied an apple to-day, mamma.
I liked it, O, so well!
We all worked hard to find about
It's skin, it's form, it's smell."

Tuesday.

"We cut an apple in parts to-day.
We studied it's pulp, O, my!
I got so tired, but then we must
Observe, and then classify."

Wednesday.

"The seeds of an old apple to-day.
We studied their color well;
We talked about their form and size
But O! my interest fell."

Thursday.

"To-day we modeled an apple, mamma.
I hate it all! You see
We talked and wrote so much of it,
I'm disgusted as can be."

Friday.

"We painted and drew an apple to-day.
The lesson I could not heed,
I hope I'll never see again
An apple or a seed."

Ella M. Powers.

Nature Study Practically Applied.

The typical schoolboy has long been known as a fairly skilful malingeringer when occasion demands it, but his shamming is usually confined to the more homely complaints of headaches and toothaches, which are capable of rapid dispersion when the crisis which necessitated their presence is past. The children of Nassington, a village in Northamptonshire, however, go more carefully and deeply to work in order to avoid the toils of school. On account of the number of children who were kept from school because of a rash on their bodies, Dr. C. N. Elliott, the medical officer of health of that district, was asked to examine them with a view to finding out the nature of the strange disease. His report showed that the whole affair was a case of malingering. The children, about twenty-five in number, were suffering from no real disease, but in order to stay away from school they had rubbed their hands and arms with the juice of the plant called "Patty Spurge." The result of this was that a vesicular eruption appeared which in most cases resembled a herpes eruption, but in some there were blisters as large as a half crown. As the children appear to be studying the physiological effects of plants, a closer knowledge of the birch tree and its branches might possibly divert their energies into another channel, or at any rate, increase their keenness for practical botany. *Latent.*

Grading and Promotion.

A system of school grading which has attracted much attention all over the country is that inaugurated by Mr. W. J. Shearer, while superintendent of the schools of New Castle, Pa. The leading newspapers from New England to California commented upon it in lengthy editorial reviews, and letters of approval were received from college presidents and professors, school superintendents and teachers of every grade. Mr. Shearer's election last year to the superintendency of Elizabeth, N. J., gave him an opportunity to test the practicability of the system on a larger scale than was possible in New Castle where he first conceived and tried it. The results show that it is applicable in any school system. The high praise accorded it by the people of Elizabeth and several of the leading papers of New Jersey, and the readiness with which the teachers adopted it, have induced the school officers of other cities to investigate the plan with a view of introducing it.

Supt. Shearer had long been convinced that the method of grading and promoting in common schools was very unsatisfactory. Visits to many cities for the purpose of studying their systems, and circulars from many more, confirmed his opinion. He sought diligently, though for some time unsuccessfully, for a plan which would be more plant than the present procustean method. Later, while superintendent of schools, at New Castle, Pa., he attempted to work out a plan by which it would be possible for children to advance just as fast as they should go, and no faster, so that the bright and dull pupils need not be yoked together during their whole school lives.

By the usual method of grading and promotion, owing to the impossibility of reclassification, the bright pupils are held back and the slow ones pushed ahead. As a result, the teaching becomes wholesale, and no allowances are made for difference in acquirements, aptitudes, physical endurance, home advantages, the rate of mental development, etc. The examination is made the test of fitness for promotion, and if a pupil fails to "pass," he must wait a year or a half year before there is another opportunity for promotion.

Supt. Shearer saw that the ideal system of grading would arrange for careful classification of pupils, according to their ability into small classes, with but a short interval between classes, so that when a pupil was ready he could pass to the next class. When the experiment was tried in New Castle, one grade was put in each room, and the pupils being carefully graded upon their ability to do the work. As differences began to appear, each school was subdivided into several small classes. Each division was expected to go as fast as it could, no exact amount of work being demanded in a given time. In the lower grades there were three or four subdivisions, in the higher, two or three. If any pupils could not stand the pace, or if, for other reasons, the superintendent gave them the extra help needed to keep them up with their class.